

Accessory Dwelling Unit Update

July 2020



What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

A secondary housing unit on a residential lot with a separate kitchen, sleeping area, and bathroom.



Housing Demand

~3,350-3,906

Low income senior households (65 and above at/below 60% AMI)

ACS, 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

~6,132

Seniors (65 and above) living alone

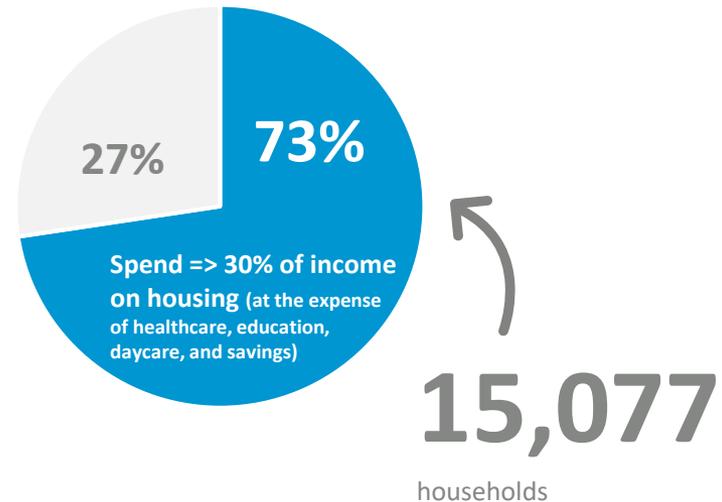
ACS, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018

3,650

of Homeowners
w/incomes up to \$75,000
who spend more than 30%
of income on housing

ACS, 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

Cost burden among renter households
with incomes less than \$75K



ACS, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018

Current City rules do not allow ADUs

- Only one family may occupy a dwelling unit
 - Family generally defined as a group of people living together as a single housekeeping unit
- Generally, only one dwelling unit may occupy a lot except for:
 - Properties in commercial zones with ground floor commercial uses can have multiple dwelling units above the ground floor as “accessory apartments”
 - Two family “stacked” units in non single-family residential zones
 - Multifamily buildings (apartments and condos)



Guest Houses

Guest houses are currently permitted in all zones as an accessory use to a single-family dwelling provided:

- It is used by temporary guests or occupants of the main residence
- It does not have a kitchen
- It is not rented or otherwise used as a separate dwelling

Guest House Exterior in Potomac Yard



Interior of Guest House



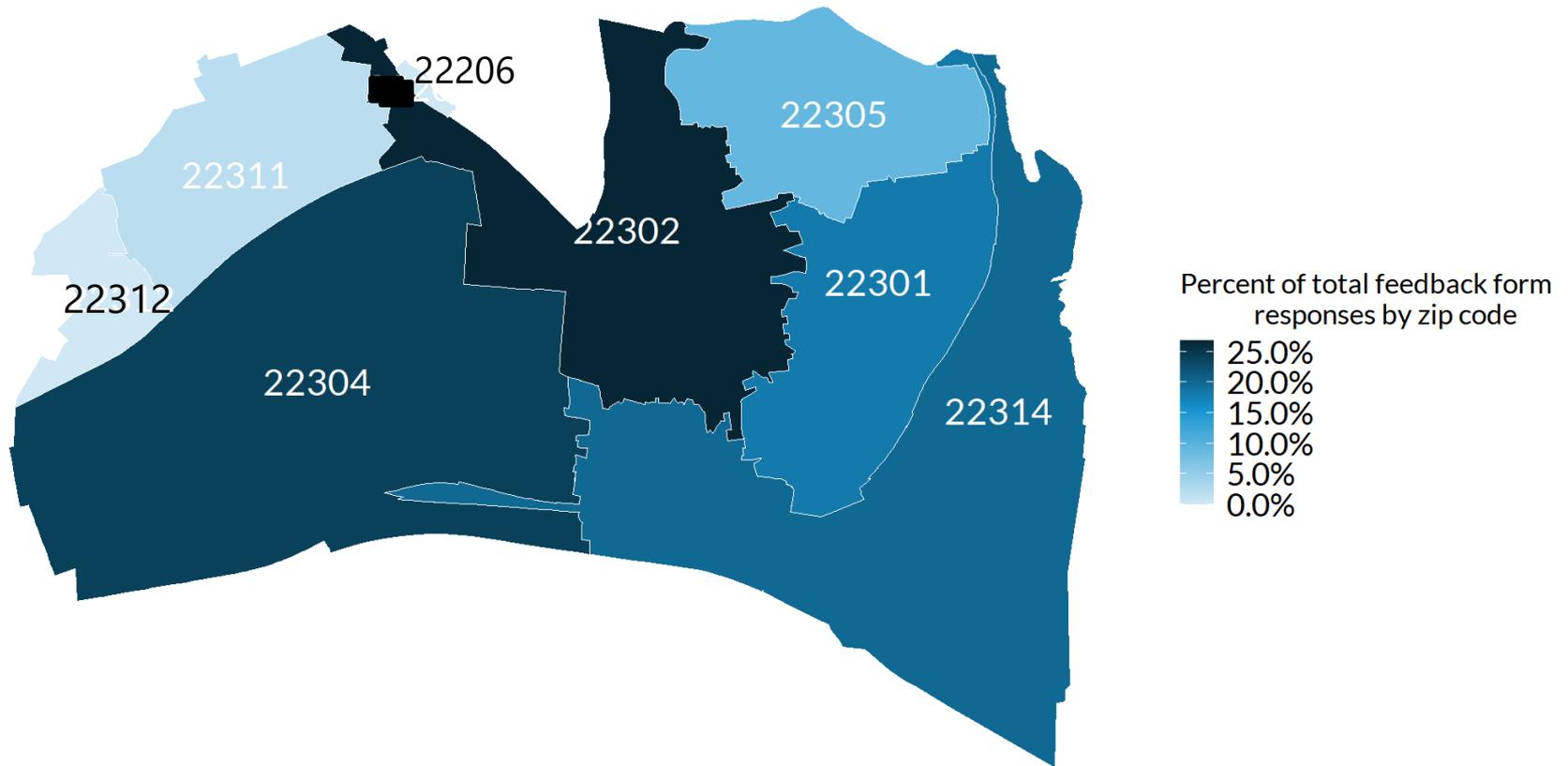
Current City rules related to short-term rentals (AirBnb, etc.)

- Short-term rentals are permitted throughout the City
 - City Council approved short-term rental registry in November 2017
 - Operators must register with the City
 - Guest houses cannot be used for short-term rentals



**What we heard from you
after the first presentation**

Who filled out the feedback form?

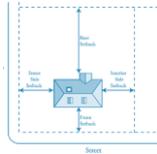


240 responses received

Key topics



Size limits/Floor Area Ratio Requirements



Setbacks



Traffic and parking



Environmental impacts



ADU policy in other jurisdictions



Density



Neighborhood impact



Expanded housing options

Specific feedback and questions about ADUs

ADUs increase desirable housing options

How would ADUs change my neighborhood?

ADUs provide needed flexibility for the elderly and for persons with disabilities

What impact would ADUs have on the environment?

How would ADUs impact density?

ADUs provide an efficient and low-impact use of existing land and buildings

How would ADUs impact traffic and parking?

ADUs allow for closer and safer social contact during pandemics

How do other cities regulate ADUs?

ADUs in other jurisdictions



ADU numbers

Select Cities/Counties

	Arlington, VA Pop. 236,842	Bloomington, MN Pop. 82,893	Boulder, CO Pop. 97,385	San Francisco, CA Pop. 881,549	Portland, OR Pop. 583,776	Washington, DC Pop. 705,749
Number of ADUs	45 between 2009 and 2020	1 permit between 2009 and 2020	230 permits between 1983 and 2018	884 permits between 2015 and 2018	3,464 permits between 2000 and 2018	151 permits
ADUs as a Percentage of Total Housing Units	0.03%	0.00%	0.51%	0.22%	1.23%	0.05%

Source: [Whitehead \(2017\)](#); [Maxable \(2018\)](#); [City of Bloomington](#); [City of Boulder](#); [City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors \(2019\)](#); [Peterson \(2019\)](#); and ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates

ADU policies in other jurisdictions

ADU policies

Selected Cities

	Arlington VA	Bloomington MN	Boulder CO	San Francisco CA	Portland OR	Washington DC
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Selected policies

<i>By right development</i>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Minimum lot size</i>	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
<i>Owner occupancy requirement</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
<i>Parking requirements</i>	No*	No	Yes	No	No	No
<i>Short term rentals permitted</i>	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

*parking for ADU only required if site has no off-street parking and on-street parking is in high demand

ADU policies

	Selected Counties	
	Montgomery County, MD	Fairfax County, VA (proposed rules)
Selected policies		
<i>By right development</i>	Yes	Yes, within a home. Detached requires special approval.
<i>Minimum lot size</i>	No	No
<i>Owner occupancy requirement</i>	No	TBD
<i>Parking requirements</i>	Yes	Yes, one designated space
<i>Short term rentals permitted</i>	No	TBD

*unless within one-mile of a metro station

Size Limits/Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Requirements

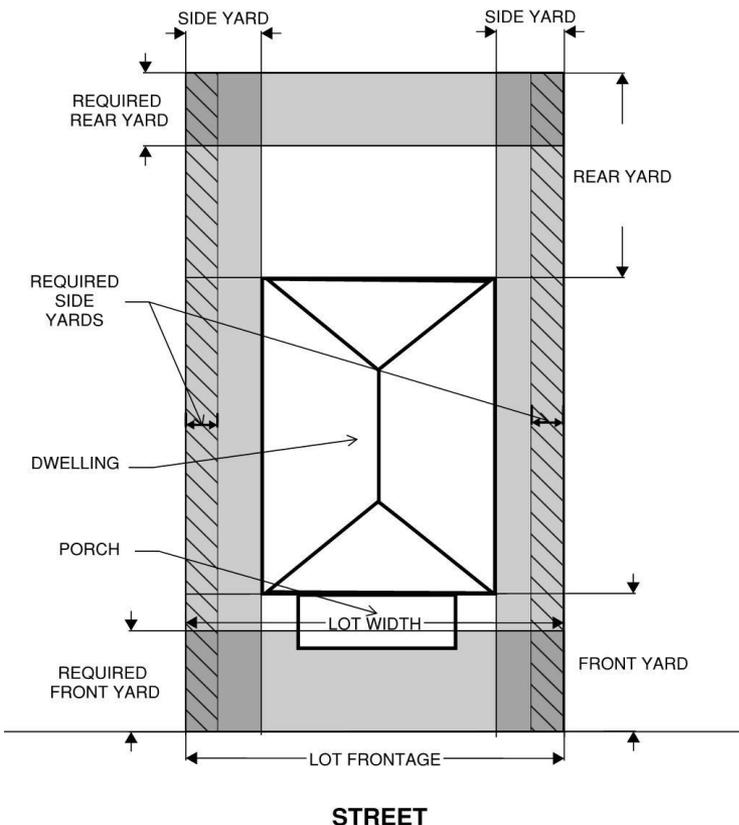
Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) is the total floor area of a building divided by the area of the lot

- All policies specify distinct size and height limits for ADUs. These requirements are meant to ensure that ADUs are compatible with and accessory to the main house
- Size limits are set either proportional to the size of the main house and/or a square footage maximum

Required Yards/Setbacks

Required Yards/Setbacks establish the minimum distance necessary between a building and a lot line

- Yard requirements vary and are generally smaller than those required for the primary dwelling
- For example, Portland has developed a tiered approach where setbacks are dependent on ADU height with detached structures less than 15 feet tall requiring no setbacks and taller structures requiring five-foot setbacks.
- In order to protect neighbor's privacy, windows and doors are sometimes only allowed on sides of the ADU that are further than five feet from the property line (Peterson 2018)
- Smaller setbacks for detached ADUs allow them to be put in places where more traditional detached structures are located (garages, sheds, and others). This allows them to be located in less-impactful locations.



Short Term Rentals

Some cities set limitations on using ADUs for **short-term rentals** (like Airbnb)



- Can limit the flexibility appeal from ADUs for homeowners
- Can make financing an ADU in the short term challenging

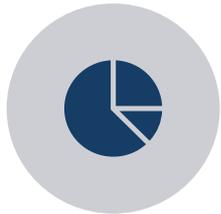
What some other jurisdictions have done to regulate STRs:

- Waive fees for all ADUs except those that are registered as short-term rentals
- Cap the number of days a unit can be used as a short-term rental
- Make regulations comparable to other residential housing forms in the city

Density and Neighborhood Impacts



Size restrictions ensure that detached ADUs remain subordinate to existing dwellings, limiting their impact on the neighborhood



ADU numbers in other jurisdictions represent small percentages of total housing numbers. These numbers show that ADU policy gradually increases density over time with minimal impact to neighborhoods



Smaller setbacks for detached ADUs allow them to be placed where traditional detached structures are located (garages, sheds, and others). This allows them to be located in less-impactful locations, again limiting their impact on the neighborhood

Traffic/Parking and the Environment

Traffic/Parking

- The City of Alexandria has an existing [Residential Parking Permit Program](#) that residents can use to help preserve parking access for residents. New Residential Parking Permit Districts can be created by [filing a petition](#) with the City.
- New off-street parking increases impervious surfaces and can take up otherwise desirable open space
- Off-street parking costs – typically \$3,000-\$5,000 per space

Environment



An ADU's smaller size requires less lumber and carbon-producing materials than other housing types



Internal ADUs do not increase impervious surfaces



An ADU's smaller size requires less energy to heat/cool than other housing types



Staff does not intend to create additional floor area exclusions for ADUs

Q&A

Q: *"Does saying yes to ADUs allow people to knock down houses and build townhomes in their place? This is what I keep hearing from those against ADUs."*

A: No. Allowing ADUs would not allow for townhomes in areas zoned for single family detached homes.

Q: *"Are the ADUs going to be required to be rented to bring in additional tax income?"*

A: No. ADUs would not be required to be rented.

Q: *"What's the impact on schools/public services with more ADUs in a neighborhood?"*

A: ADUs are anticipated to bring very incremental change. Staff will coordinate with ACPS, Code Administration, T&ES and other City agencies to ensure they are kept aware on a regular basis of the number of permits being requested.

Q: *"Are there any measures that the city will take so that ADUs do not destroy the character of my neighborhood?"*

A: Yes. ADUs will have height, FAR, and setback requirements to ensure compatibility.

Other Questions to be Addressed through Study

- Q: *"Will the uses be only residential? Could I use an ADU as a home office, for example?"*
- Q: *"What are some financing options for interested homeowners?"*
- Q: *"Will regulations differ by zone?"*
- Q: *"How to handle conflict between local zoning and restrictive covenants of subdivisions? How will HOAs be affected? Will they be able to establish their own rules?"*
- Q: *"Any tax incentives from the city for those considering to build these?"*
- Q: *"Will properties with ADUs be charged double the refuse fee and double the Stormwater fee?"*

Now, we want to hear from
you!

Tell us what you think using this link:

[https://urban.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe
/form/SV_1QSRYTIn20qic6N](https://urban.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1QSRYTIn20qic6N)

What's Next

July 24 comment period on second presentation closes

Early August release of draft recommendations, request for feedback

You can provide feedback...

Mid August virtual open house

Fall 2020 Planning Commission and City Council

...at any time during this process!

For more information

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